

# Heaven's Strange Logic

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Good morning all. Just praise God that we have this gift of memory.

It's quite a wonderful thing to have the ability to remember. Just before I get into what I want to say today, I was remembering this morning about a time when Agnes and I used to have a midweek meeting for prayer and Bible study in our home when we were up in Perth.

There was one couple who, they were always first at the meeting, always arrived first. And this particular night, we were 20 minutes into the meeting and there was still no sign of them.

And yet we had known earlier in the day they were planning to be with us. So we were concerned. I was sitting at a window where I could see right down the length of the street. And then suddenly, while we were sitting quietly, I heard bang and bang.

And I looked out and realized that the couple had just got out of their car and their doors had banged. And I could almost see a blue arc between the two of them. They had had the mother of all rows on the way to the prayer meeting.

[ 1 : 20 ]     Of course, that's an ancient tradition. You know that, don't you? But here they were.

I welcomed them at the door and their faces were set. And I brought them into the room. And of course, as it would turn out, because they were the last to arrive, there were two seats left in the room on opposite sides of the room.

So she sat there and he sat there. And we went on for another ten minutes and I realized we weren't getting anywhere at all. The atmosphere in the room was terrible.

Everybody was distracted. And so I don't know honestly whether it was cheek or holy cheek. It was definitely cheek. But I got up on my feet and I walked into the middle of the room and I held out a hand to him.

And I held out a hand to her. And I brought them into the middle of the room and I joined their hands in mine. And I turned to her and I said, Do you take this man? And she burst into tears.

[ 2 : 25 ]     And I said to him, Do you take this woman? And he burst into tears. And I burst into tears. And the whole room just went liquid, you know. It was just an amazing moment.

But you see, at that point, we all began to realize that when you're really mad at someone you love, you forget that you love them. Memory fails you in the midst of the heat and the anger.

So it's important to use our memories the right way around. And that's what we're going to try and think about today. Because God has forgiven us. And do you know what his forgiveness means?

It means forgetfulness. He doesn't just forgive. He forgets. He remembers our sins no more. Do I hear a hallelujah somewhere?

Yeah. What a God we serve. Let's just pray for a moment. Lord our God, we just simply admire you.

[ 3 : 34 ] Everything about you is beautiful. It's sweet. It's good. It's righteous. It's holy. It's perfect. It's true. And we use all these beautiful adjectives, Lord.

And even they're not enough. Everything we can say about you is off the scale. We just marvel at you, Father. And we marvel that we are here as sinners saved by grace today.

We remember that, Lord. If we forget everything else, we remember that. And we bless you in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's turn to the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount is a real problem to all of us. Because Jesus' logic is just not our logic.

And so we've got so much to learn. I don't care what age any of us are today. We've got so much to learn. And if I turn around, I'm sure you'll see my L plates.

[ 4 : 50 ] But I'll be wearing those until I see the Lord. Okay, let's be in...

Sorry, I've got my Bible at the wrong place here. I don't know why I did that. I put the marker in at the wrong place. We're in Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 5.

Okay, we begin at verse 43. And we'll read a wee bit. And then we'll move down.

And we'll pray the section where he teaches how to pray. So at verse 43, Jesus starts saying something that is completely and utterly illogical.

You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

[ 5 : 55 ] For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. And then we move down to verse 9 of chapter 6. And he's teaching them to pray.

And he says, Pray like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

[ 7 : 01 ] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But, if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. Amen.

May God help us connect with his heart in all of this today. You see, heaven has a completely different kind of logic from us.

I wonder how many of us think that the Bible is relevant to today's headlines. Let me give you an example.

We've been reading all week about, for several weeks now, about mobs rampaging through the streets of our major cities. Basically, violent thugs, terrorizing people.

[ 8 : 17 ] That's one way to look at it. Let me tell you another way to look at it, with the help of God's word. Here's another way to look at the headlines, and to look at these people.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That's another way to read the headlines, isn't it?

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. if someone could forgive the people who hammered the nails through his flesh, and pray for forgiveness for the mockers, and the spitters, and the abusers at the foot of the cross, who were enjoying his suffering.

Do you think we could manage to pray for forgiveness for the folks who are terrorizing our streets? Or is that too much to ask? You see, Jesus, when he prayed, he, he prays in a different way from us.

He says here, pray for your enemies. love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. Wow.

[ 10 : 00 ] Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you. He says, and then, as a result of that, you will be like your father, in heaven. you'll be identifiable, as the children of God.

He came unto his own, and his own did not receive him, but to those who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Folks, see this business of forgiveness? We are a forgiving people, by a forgiving God, who requires us to be a forgiving people.

And he has a right to demand that of us. And as John the Apostle said, his commands are not burdensome. What's a burden about forgiving someone?

It's just a choice. Isn't it? How many of us are sitting here, thinking about someone right now, and we've perhaps had a grudge against them for years.

[ 11 : 07 ] Or it might even be a race of people, that we just don't like. But whoever these people are, our God commands us, to forgive, and to love our enemies.

He was looking straight at his own disciples, when he said, love your enemies. And they didn't have to look outside of their circle of 12, for their enemies. One of the Simons in the group, was a zealot.

He was a trained assassin. His whole, his whole ethos in life, was to kill Romans, and promote the welfare of the Jewish people.

And he's looking across the circle, and the other side of the circle, is a man called Matthew, who's been collecting the taxes for the Romans. I don't think they had much trouble, looking for their enemies, really, did they?

Peter's impulsion, you know, he's in there, he's got to make something happen, he's got to get up there, and get it done. And there's Thomas, who wants to overthink everything.

[ 12 : 26 ] I mean, Peter must have been driven to distraction by Thomas. So love your enemies, you know.

And sometimes love your enemies, just means, love your wife. Love your kids. Love your own family. Sometimes we don't need to look outside of our own household, for enmity and hostility.

No one could pray like Jesus. I mean, he had only to ask his father, and his prayer was granted.

Twelve legions of angels, no problem. His to command. You would think, would you not, that with the power to pray, and to ask like that, and have his prayers answered, he never even needed to leave heaven, to accomplish our salvation.

Surely he could just have stayed where he was, in all the glories, and the comforts of heaven, and all the accolades of the angels, who served him, and not bother coming to earth at all, and just say, Father, will you just save them all?

[ 13 : 47 ] That seems logical to us, doesn't it? But prayer wasn't enough. Because you see, the life is in the blood.

And sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death. So the only way to deal with sin, is for the shedding of innocent blood.

Not the shedding of sinful blood, that's not going to do any good at all. It has to be the shedding of innocent blood, to make good what sin has accomplished. Let me tell you something folks, hands up if you're saved.

Right. Do you want to know something? That is the most illogical thing. There is absolutely nothing logical, about being saved, there is nothing logical, about being forgiven, for crimes so serious, that they couldn't be put right, without crucifixion.

I'm going to say that again, because I think we need to grasp it. There is nothing logical, about being forgiven, for crimes so serious, that only crucifixion would put them right.

[ 15 : 15 ] And it's even less logical, for the guilty to be acquitted, because an innocent man died. Where's the logic in any of that?

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Because heaven's logic is different from ours. God looks at things quite differently.

He was definitely this Jesus, when he came here. I mean, can you imagine what it was like, to keep him company for three years?

Your jaw would spend most of its time, on the floor. You know, jaw-dropping things, every five minutes, it would be something he said, it would be something he did, it would be his attitude to hostility, he was provoked constantly, and he returned it with kindness, and respect.

And you would, your jaw would be dropping all the time, your eyes would be popping. Can't believe this. That 12-year-old girl was dead.

[ 16 : 25 ] She was definitely dead. These people, they couldn't go to the supermarket, and buy their butcher meat, and take it home in a nice wrapper, and put it in the oven, and bring it out all cooked and nice.

If they wanted a nice, meaty meal, they had to go out and kill something, and bring it back. They knew when something was dead. And this 12-year-old girl was dead, lying in a bed, and her parents were beside themselves with grief, and the mourners were there, the professional mourners, that they had in those days.

Somebody playing music, and others singing dirges, and all the rest of it. And Jesus said, she's only asleep, and they laughed them out of the room, because they knew she was dead. But he had a different definition.

And he sat with the girl, and he took her hand, to Alita Kubi. Little girl, I say to you, arise.

This is our Jesus. Nothing is too hard for him. So your eyes are popping, your jaws dropping, and that's an almost permanent state with you.

[ 17 : 42 ] You walk around in this state of constant amazement. And so when he gets a prayer answered, you're not in the least surprised. And then he sends you out two by two.

And he tells you, go and do what I've just been doing. And he's like, what? I can't do that. And then you discover, you're actually doing it. The sick are being healed.

The deaf are hearing. The lame are walking. The demons are fleeing. And you're still just the ordinary person that he sent out on this mission.

Do you look with dismay on the anguish of Israel right now? Because I just feel so sad for the people of Israel.

And I feel sad for Gaza. And I feel sad for Ukraine. And I feel sad for everybody who's suffering the inhumanity of war right now. But you know, if you're going to pray for people, you need a different kind of logic to pray.

[ 18 : 59 ] Now let me explain that. In the days of Elijah, the spring rains had failed six months previously.

And so if your rains fail, your crops fail. Your animals die. You can't feed your family. Famine sets in.

It's a serious thing. And in the Middle East, they depend on the rhythm of the rains. They depend on it far more than we do because Israel would give its right arm for the rain that we have in Scotland.

But there they were in a state of a real bad scene. The bare earth was all cracked. Crazy all over the place.

Animals lying dead. Skeletons bleaching in the sun. Children crying for food and parents not having it to give to them.

[ 20 : 11 ] And everybody's frightened and they're all crying out and they're praying for rain. Of course they're praying for rain. And God's man, Elijah, he's praying for drought.

Hello? He's praying for drought. He's praying for drought. Hello? He's praying for drought. How could he possibly do such a thing?

Do you know why he can do it? Because he knows the word of the Lord. Now, just think about what was happening. This was the time of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Two of the most wicked monarchs that Israel ever had.

And the people, because of Jezebel's cult, her pagan cult, they were worshipping a god called Baal.

And they believed that Baal was the god of rain and of fertility. How did they worship this god? Let me tell you.

[ 21 : 18 ] They burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to this god. They went down to the temple and had ritual prostitution.

They had illicit sex with prostitutes in the temple in order to worship Baal. Now, let me ask you, what do you think would have happened if God Almighty had sent a deluge of rain on this land where animals were dying and the ground was cracked and people couldn't feed themselves?

Would Yahweh have received the glory and the credit for that? No, he wouldn't. The people would have said, we were right to burn our children in the fire.

We were right to go and have sex with these prostitutes. Great God Baal has saved us. The God of the rain, the God of fertility, he has saved us.

Let's burn more children. Let's have more filthy sex. brothers and sisters, Elijah knew exactly what the nation needed.

[ 22 : 36 ] They didn't need rain. They urgently needed drought. They needed judgment. And nothing less was going to save them. Nothing less was going to rescue the nation from the godlessness that had overtaken the land.

Mary, Mary of Nazareth, was given a message by an angel.

She was told she was going to have a baby without the need of a husband. And she was going to have to call this child Yeshua, Jesus, because he will save his people from their sin.

Now this was going to be Israel's Messiah. They had been waiting for the Messiah for generations. And he was going to save his people from the Romans?

No. He was going to save them from Herod and his gang? No. He was going to save them from the Pharisees?

[ 23 : 50 ] No. He was going to save them from their sin. You shall call his name Yeshua because he will save his people from their sin.

They needed saving from themselves. Elijah's people needed saving from themselves. So Elijah had to pray differently from everybody else.

And Mary had to think differently from everybody else. And when Jesus came on the scene and began preaching, he was a completely different Messiah from the one they had all expected.

They thought he would raise an army and chase the Romans out of the land. They didn't expect a king coming meek on a donkey.

You see, folks, we need to understand that God is trying to teach all of us that when it comes to praying, we need to see things differently.

[ 24 : 54 ] Now, we've got a choice about these mobs that are beginning to run about wild in our streets and the police can't or perhaps won't contain them.

I don't know what's going on. But we need to look at these people and there's only two ways of looking at them. We can either be filled with nationalistic resentment at what's happening that would even disrespect this remembrance time that we have and drape the cenotaph with flags that have nothing to do with our remembrance day.

Or, we can look at our headlines through the eyes of Jesus who came to save us from our sins and we can say in relation to those headlines, in relation to those people, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

How many of us have thought, including this guy here, how many of us have thought to be on our knees and pray for the rioters in London?

How many of us have felt resentment rising up within us that these things should be happening in our streets? Guilty as charged.

[ 26 : 26 ] Like most people of his day, my dad, as a young man, was stuck in a uniform and given a gun and sent off and told to defend our freedom.

And because, because, wait for this, because 80 million people lost their lives in World War II alone, 80 million people around the world, because 80 million people lost their lives, we have the freedom today to run around as lawless yorbs in the street.

What a good stewardship of the blood that was shed for our freedom. Well, let's just slow down for a minute here, because Jesus said he was the alpha and the omega, right?

He's the beginning and the end. He's the absolute beginning. He himself doesn't have any beginning. He has, he is, as he always has been and always will be.

He's got no beginning and he's got no end. Are we impressed? But he's also the end, he's the absolute end, he's the absolute end of everything that is horrific for us.

[ 28 : 07 ] We, we needed so much help from heaven. We're told that Jesus came to destroy him who holds the power of death and who has held us all our lives in slavery by our fear of death.

Do you realize that all the insurance companies would go bust tomorrow if we weren't afraid of death? What a change in society that would bring if nobody was afraid of death.

When Charles Spurgeon was visiting his, his, his congregation during the cholera epidemic in the 1800s, somebody said to him, are you not afraid of contracting this terrible disease?

He said, well, of course I am. Everybody would be. But he says, you need to know something. He says, for me, instant death is instant glory.

You see, you get a different logic from heaven, a different way of looking at things, a different way of praying, a different way of looking at enemies, an ability to look at an enemy, however vile they are, and say, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

[ 29 : 38 ] I'm thinking of Stephen now, not the one at the back, but the one who was dying under a hail of rocks. And no man on earth ever looked more like Jesus at the point of his death.

Lord, do not hold this sin against him. And the rocks are falling on his head, breaking his bones, and he's dying under this hail of rocks and hatred. Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

Do you know, I am convinced, to this day I am convinced, that because Saul of Tarsus was watching the way that man died, and approving of it, on one level he was approving, on the other level something was happening inside him.

Jesus said to him, it's hard for you to kick against the goads. And he had been goaded by Stephen's death. How can this man forgive me?

Oh, dear God, may we goad our society with forgiveness. May we forgive the politicians we detest.

[ 30 : 58 ] May we forgive the yobs that are running about in our streets and terrorizing people, knocking over old poppy vendors, men who have fought in war situations to protect others.

May we forgive these people who are doing these things today. The politicians that are giving our freedoms away, day after day, may we forgive them.

May we have mercy. Because you see, what's going on right now in our society, you might say, for the church, what's going on for the church is identity theft.

That's what's happening to the church right now. We're losing our identity. We're not recognizable anymore as the children of God.

We talk just like the rest of the people in the world. We watch all the same TV shows. We read the same newspapers. We have the same attitudes.

[ 32 : 10 ] And when people are rotten to us, we instinctively want to be rotten back to them. Brothers and sisters, the late John Stott wrote a beautiful little commentary on the Sermon on the Mount many years ago, and he called it Christian Counterculture.

The book title alone is Dynamic. Christian Counterculture. That's the church, brothers and sisters. That's our calling. When Daniel was dragged 900 miles away from his home, all he had were memories behind him of broken hearted parents, or maybe dead parents.

I don't know whether his parents lived or not. But he saw babies smashed on rocks. He saw the destruction of Jerusalem, the burning of the beloved city.

he saw the slaughter of the priests. He saw the end of everything that had been familiar to him. There was no longer a priesthood. There were no longer sacrifices.

There was no temple. And he's dragged off to this completely alien landscape. They give him a Babylonian name which honors a Babylonian God, and they take away from him his own name which honors the God of Israel who was his judge, Daniel.

[ 33 : 44 ] And so Nebuchadnezzar's intention is that Daniel will just assimilate. He'll become a good little Babylonian, and he'll get over it. That's the intention of the emperor.

And you can read from beginning to end of the book of Daniel, and you will never ever think that Daniel could be mistaken for a Babylonian. He could never be mistaken for a Babylonian.

He was God's man. He was a counterculture in the midst of this godless empire. Everything about Daniel was different.

Everything about him was winsome. It was holy. It was pure. It was true. true. He had a copy of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles.

We know that because he refers to it. And in that letter God had commanded his people. He said to the exiles, work for the good of the city to which I have sent you.

[ 34 : 52 ] Excuse me, who sent them to Babylon? I thought it was Nebuchadnezzar. No, it was Yahweh. It was the living God who sent them to Babylon.

And with almost divine holy cheek, God uses Babylon as the incubator for a reborn Israel 70 years later. And he keeps them in safety in Babylon and then brings them back again as he said he would.

In all that time, Daniel can't be mistaken for a Babylonian. He's completely and utterly God's man. He is a counterculture in the midst of the culture of Babylon.

Totally different. Totally separate. Totally unmistakable. Brothers and sisters, that's the challenge to you and me today. Are we going to just join the tribalism of this day?

Because that's what's happening in the UK right now. We have got so many tribes. We have got LGBT. We have got the feminists. We have got the nationalists.

[ 36 : 06 ] We have got the you know there are so many different tribes. And they are all looking for support. And the media has its own agenda.

And they are calling to manipulate your emotions. And we are becoming a tribal society. brothers and sisters, we need to be children of the living God.

And when I see the headlines today, I want with all my heart to drop to my knees and say, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

That's the kind of person I want to be. That's the kind of praying I want to do. I don't want to think like the rest of the world. I don't want to be praying for rain when the right thing to be praying for is drought.

I don't want to do that. And I don't want to look at the people of Israel and the people of Gaza and choose between them.

[ 37 : 16 ] Because Israel was chosen out of the nations for the sake of the nations to be a light to the Gentiles. And Israel still doesn't get it. I have lots of ministry friends, theologians who just don't get Israel's place in God's purposes.

They just don't get it. And you know I don't get upset about them not getting it because Israel doesn't get it. Israel doesn't understand.

To this day the veil remains over them. But God has decreed a day when that veil will be removed and they will look on him whom they have pierced and they will weep for him as one weeps for an only son.

That day is coming and Paul the apostle says to us get ready for that day because that will be life from the dead for the whole world when the Jews finally have their eyes opened to their Messiah.

He's coming again. He's already been and he's coming again. Okay. Now we're going to do we're just going to finish with one thing that has been on my heart since I started thinking about today.

[ 38 : 35 ] I'd like us to have another two minutes silence. And before we do take a wee bit of time to collect your thoughts. Think of somebody who really has it in for you right now.

Or somebody that you wouldn't want to do a favour for because of your bad relationship with them. Think of an enemy. Think of somebody who rubs you up the wrong way.

Think of somebody who makes you bristle every time they come on the television. Think of a race of people that you've never really liked and wouldn't want to be associated with.

Just think of people like that that don't like your day. That just bring gloom into your life. Think of someone like that and we'll take two minutes to pray for them.

And if the only prayer you've got on your lips is Father forgive them for they know not what they do, that will do fine. as long as we mean it and intend it. These might be people who've hurt you.



[ 39 : 47 ] They might be people who've tried to kill you. They might be people who will try to kill you if they get the chance. But let's think of those people and finish with that today.

Let's in quietness now just sit for a couple of minutes and pray Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

It's not logical but it's right. Amen. Good job.

Good luck. products in place Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 42 : 02 ] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. We unconditionally release them from any sense of debt to us.

Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors. And if the folks we're praying for are not saved, O Lord, God our Father save our enemies.

We realize that Hamas hates Israel. And we realize that Satan hates Hamas as much as he hates Israel.

He just hates all who have anything of your likeness in them. The most vile person on earth is capable of kissing his wife and cuddling his children.

[ 43 : 37 ] And we just cry out to you, Father. We pray that your salvation will come to the ends of the earth without discrimination. In the name of Jesus.

Amen.